

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 020010

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: ANNOUNCED RETURN OF ARNULFO ARIAS TO PANAMA

REF: PANAMA 0567

1. EMBASSY'S COMMENT IN REFTEL SEEMS ON THE MARK. GONZALEZ-REVILLA TOLD BELL THE EVENING OF JANUARY 26, DURING THE COURSE OF A TELEPHONIC CONVERSATION WITH TORRIJOS AT FARALLON, THAT THE GOP ALLOWED THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO BE REPRODUCED IN THE LOCAL MEDIA RATHER THAN ALLOW THE WORD TO SPREAD FURTIVELY, WHICH WOULD HAVE STIMULATED MORE RUMORS. THE GOP ALSO WANTED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE AFFAIR OF THE BUSINESSMEN WAS PART OF A BIGGER PLOT INVOLVING ARIAS (WHICH TORRIJOS FIRMLY BELIEVES).

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2. GONZALEZ-REVILLA SPECULATED THAT IF ARIAS RETURNS

"THE NATIONAL GUARD WILL EAT HIM UP". HE EXPLAINED THAT ARIAS IS SO OUT OF TOUCH WITH CONTEMPORARY PANAMANIAN REALITY THAT HE DOES NOT REALIZE THAT THE CHARACTER OF THE GUARD HAS CHANGED RADICALLY SINCE ARIAS KNEW AND ATTENDED TO ITS NEEDS. KISSINGER

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